

PATHFINDERS

ST. LAWRENCE

HEBREWS 12:18-29,
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Intro	<p>Have you ever wished you could hear God speaking? Do you think you know what He would say if He did speak right now to you? This passage tells us about a time when God spoke to people in the past. But even more incredibly, it says that God is speaking even now to you. Will you listen to His voice?</p>
Read	<p>Hebrews 12:18-29 (NIV UK)</p> <p>¹⁸You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; ¹⁹to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, ²⁰because they could not bear what was commanded: 'If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.' ²¹The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, 'I am trembling with fear.'</p> <p>²²But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.</p> <p>²⁵See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? ²⁶At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, 'Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.' ²⁷The words 'once more' indicate the removing of what can be shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain.</p>

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our 'God is a consuming fire.'

Watch



Given that this passage talks a lot about the difference between the earthly Mt. Sinai and the heavenly Mt. Zion, this video talking about the difference between Heaven and Earth is really helpful!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zy2AQIK6C5k>

Think

This passage starts out with some rather scary imagery doesn't it?

What are some of phrases and words that the passage uses to describe the first mountain?

The picture you get of the first mountain here is so scary! It's a picture of Mt. Sinai in the Old Testament, where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Things were really tense there, weren't they? It was so dangerous to go near the mountain, which was where God was, that if an animal touched it, and absorbed the holiness that was there, they animal would have to be killed from a distance. It was much too dangerous to have that animal filled with the white-hot holiness of God running around the camp! Even Moses was afraid. No doubt he was terrified when he went up on the mountain alone to speak with God. Can you imagine what he must have felt to see the smoke rising up all around the mountain coming from the fire that surrounded God's presence up on top of the mountain? Wow! The passage tells us that as believers in Jesus, however, we have come to a different mountain to speak with God.

What are the differences with this mountain compared to the last one?

The picture you get of Mount Zion is completely different from the one you get of Mt. Sinai isn't it? What is there on the mountain with God? Thousands and thousands of angels "in joyful assembly", the "church of the firstborn" (which is you and me if we believe in Jesus, the "firstborn" being a reference to our resurrection from the dead in the future) and to Jesus, who stands in the middle between us and God, "mediating" our relationship with Him. This Mt. Zion is really a picture of heaven. It's a picture of what we are citizens already of, but what we cannot yet see. It's something we must wait to see the full reality of until Jesus comes back. We have all of the benefits of being citizens of this wonderful kingdom: Jesus stands for us before God, standing in our place for our sins, but we have yet to see the beautiful city that will one day be our home. But, draw your attention to what the passage says about the firstborn. It says that their "names are written in heaven." Isn't that a cool picture? Have you ever wondered if God knows you? Well, this

passage clearly says that you aren't just some number on a page. You aren't a quota to be filled. You are a person, with a name known to God and you are deeply, personally loved by Him!

There's a really interesting thing that the passage says toward the end of this paragraph. It says that Jesus' "sprinkled blood... speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." What do you suppose that means? Well, think back to who Abel was. If you remember way back in the beginning of the Bible, Abel was one of the sons of Adam and Eve. Cain was his brother. Abel offered a sacrifice to God that God accepted and loved, but his brother Cain offered God a sacrifice that God had forbidden. Because Abel's sacrifice was accepted and Cain's was not, Cain got jealous of Abel and murdered him. When God confronted Cain about the murder, he said that Abel's spilled blood was "crying out" to Him from the ground. Abel's blood was, poetically-speaking, crying out to God for justice because of His unjust killing by Cain. In the same way, Jesus' blood cried out to God from the ground where it was spilled too. However, instead of demanding justice be paid for Jesus' own unjust murder, His blood instead *PAYS* the price that justice demanded. Jesus paid His own murderer's guilty charge! He forgave His own killers by the very blood they shed. How incredible is that? When you believe in Jesus, He does not give you what you deserve, because of His great love for you.

What's the warning in the next paragraph?

This next passage calls us to not refuse God who is still speaking to us. Notice it doesn't say "spoke" as if God only spoke way back then and isn't speaking now. No, it says that God is still speaking even now. And what is He saying? To follow Him! Just as He told the Israelites at Mt. Sinai to follow Him, He says for us to trust in Jesus even now.

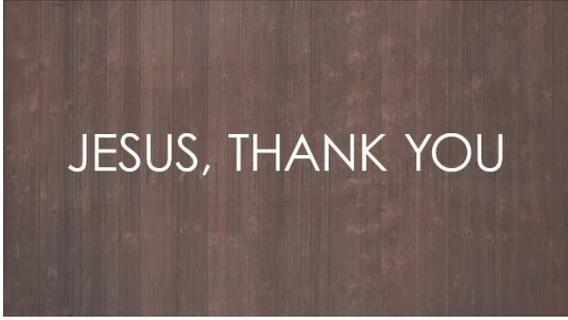
What does the passage that God's voice will one day do?

The passage gives us a sombre warning. It tells us that if the Israelites who didn't listen to God back at the *earthly* Mt. Sinai were punished for their disobedience, how much more will we not escape from the punishment due to us if we disobey God now who is speaking from the *heavenly* Mt. Zion? It says that there's a great "shaking" that's coming. At that time, God won't just shake the mountains as He did when He visited the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, but He'll shake all of Creation (the "not only the earth but also the heavens.")! But, the promise is that the things that can't be shaken will remain.

What does the passage say can't be shaken?

What should our response be to the fact that Mt. Zion can't be shaken? "...let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire.'" We should be filled with awe at the power of God, but also that He has chosen to include you and me in that Kingdom that won't be shaken! When we place our faith in Jesus, listening to what He is speaking and following Him, we become citizens of that great heavenly and eternal city. How cool is that? Doesn't that make you want to thank God?

Listen



JESUS, THANK YOU

Our response to the awesome truths we've read here in the Bible should be to thank Jesus for how much He's given us. He's given us a kingdom that can't be shaken, and a place there as citizens where our names are written in heaven. This song

is all about reflecting what Jesus has done and thanking Him for it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHp8eThI2qk>

Pray

- Thank Jesus for all the wonderful things He's done for you in dying on the Cross.
- Reflect and thank God that Jesus' blood doesn't demand justice be served by you for His death, but instead serves that price for you in your place.
- Commit to listening to what God is saying in His Word now and to follow His Word, praying that you wouldn't have a hard heart to follow what He says.
- Thank God that He knows your name, and has written it in heaven.